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ABSTRACT

This paper provides guidelines for teachers of students with disabilities in the use of bibliotherapy in classroom settings. A brief history, definition, guidelines, and benefits of bibliotherapy are discussed relative to application for traditional classroom teaching. Guidelines include: (1) motivate the learner with interesting introductory activities and selected classroom activities and materials that represent diversity among families; (2) allow time for the reading of the bibliotherapeutic book by increasing the normal reading time by at least 25 percent or more; (3) provide ample time for students to develop their thoughts about the book; (4) furnish discussion follow-up time with questions that require a complete range of higher level thinking skills; and (5) evaluate the process and the outcome, directing the student or students to closure through self-evaluation. The paper also discusses the following effective practices for providing a supportive, safe, and positive discussion: using positive reinforcement, choosing predictable characters and situations, asking nonjudgmental questions, encouraging student-generated questions, extending classroom reading time for students who need it, and providing meaningful extension activities. A booklist of children's literature for bibliotherapy in the classroom is provided in an attached appendix. The appendix provides an extensive booklist divided into the following categories in relation to children's literature for bibliotherapy in the classroom: attention deficit/hyperactive disorder; dyslexia; learning disabilities; mental retardation; minorities and immigration; and disabilities; and social-emotional. (Contains 19 references.) (CR)

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"Booking It" to Peace: Bibliotherapy Guidelines for Teachers

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper was to provide guidelines for teachers in the use of bibliotherapy in classroom settings. The primary focus was on children with disabilities. A brief history, definition, guidelines and benefits are all discussed relative to application for traditional classroom teaching. A booklist of children's literature for bibliotherapy in the classroom is provided in the attached appendix.

"Booking It" to Peace: Bibliotherapy Guidelines for Teachers

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tale which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we wish them to have when they are grown up? We cannot… Anything received into the mind of this age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts… **(Plato, 374 B.C.)**

Humans seem to have an insatiable thirst for knowledge that can be partially satisfied by the printed word. When that thirst is driven by personal events in one's life, the impact of rich literature can bring about a solace and peace leading to self-understanding (Davis & Wilson, 1992). Naturally curious, children too have a thirst for knowledge as they journey through their lives to adulthood. Unfortunately, that journey has become more challenging for children today. Children in America are entering school with a multitude of experiences that in the past took a lifetime to acerue. This exposure is due to influences such as the media, changes in family structure, mobility, and other factors too numerous to mention. Regretably, these experiences do not always serve to promote the healthy development of our children. As a result, the needs of children in classrooms today are such that teachers are challenged at a level requiring them to utilize all resources and strategies available to meet needs beyond pure academic acquisition of knowledge. One strategy beginning with the creation of books is bibliotherapy.

Documented use of bibliotherapy reaches back to the Ancient Greeks where it was primarily used with patients who were mentally ill, and continues through the twentieth century to present day use in a variety of settings (Bernstein, 1977; McMath, 1997; McTague, 1998; Piercy, 1996; Stroud, Stroud, & Staley, 1999). The first books

printed for children were basically used to mold the minds of children toward good character by focusing on religious and moral values. As children's literature evolved and changed to include less acceptable and sometimes demoralizing storybooks, evaluation of children's literature began focusing on the identification and creation of lists of acceptable books for children. The first of these lists published by Edwin Starbuck (1928) prompted the move toward bibliotherapy, which was first applied to maladjusted children in 1946 (Agnes, 1946, pp.8-16).

As our society and the lives of our children have become more complex, the issues and the challenges facing them as they grow have also become more complex. Focusing on the moral development of literary characters where problems seem to work out ideally in the end no longer applies to the emotions of children facing such issues of AIDS, divorce, drugs and alcohol, homosexuality, pregnancy, prejudice, rape, social alienation, suicide, violence, and learning problems in a highly literate society. Bibliotherapy has evolved dramatically to include a plethora of books whose story characters have realistic problems to be faced and often not necessarily resolved, just as in real life. Young readers of realistic literature often find solace and hope through the written page in a way that will most likely benefit them on their life's journey.

Definition

Connecting literature to the emotions of the reader for therapeutic purposes has been termed bibliotherapy. The intent is for the reader to think about and question situations from another perspective. Bibliotherapy is not a cure all, pill, or band aid to fix a child's problems (Smith 1989). Bibliotherapy has been defined in a variety of ways of which the following are a representative sample:

What bibliotherapy is.

> ... a family of techniques for structuring interaction between a facilitator and a participant based on mutual sharing of literature (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989).

> Bibliotherapy is a tool that can be used to promote healing through books (Smith, 1989).

> Bibliotherapy is the process of growing toward emotional good health through the medium of literature (Davis & Wilson, 1992).

> ... the use of books to help people solve problems (Aiex, 1993).

> Bibliotherapy is the therapeutic use of literature with guidance or intervention from a therapist (Cohen, 1994).

> ... the use of guided reading to help the reader grow in self-awareness and to help in thinking about one's own circumstances through critical inquiry (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

> Bibliotherapy is a technique that uses literature to help students develop self-awareness, and to better understand their problems (Coombs, 1998).

Although bibliotherapy has primarily been implemented for specific therapeutic purposes by those trained in the helping professions (i.e. psychologists, counselors, or social workers), implications can be made that extend the implementation of bibliotherapy beyond clinical settings. Capturing the message of the previous definitions, the authors of this paper seek to extend meaning beyond the traditional clinical setting. The following definition includes classroom environments where teachers are more directly working with students. The authors suggest:

> Bibliotherapy is the process by which teachers, as informed decision-makers, select appropriate reading materials and match them to the needs of individual students to assist in the development of self-awareness, problem-solving skills, perspective-taking, and understanding of problems.

Guidelines

Typically, teachers have little, if any, instruction or guidelines on how to appropriately implement bibliotherapy in their classrooms. Yet, bibliotherapy is dependent on the idea that teachers know their students well and understand their needs (Davis and Wilson, 1992). Those that choose bibliotherapy do it to meet the immediate needs of their students. According to Ouzts (1991), in the United States, educators have recognized the critical need for delivering literacy instruction to at-risk children. Davis and Wilson (1992) indicated that teachers in public schools used bibliotherapy with students who had disabilities. Using familiar people and situations can aid the student who may feel alone and unique. All students, including minorities and those with disabilities can potentially profit using these guidelines in bibliotherapy.

Previous general guidelines have suggested using five basic procedures in bibliotherapy (Aiex, N.K., 1993). These included: (1) motivation with introductory activities; (2) reading time; (3) incubation time; (4) follow-up discussion time; and (5) evaluation and closure. Extending these guidelines to students who specifically have learning and emotional difficulties and who are classified as needing special education techniques has resulted in the following guidelines designed for students with specific special education needs. These new guidelines include:

1. Motivate the learner with interesting introductory activities. Select classroom activities and materials that represent diversity among families.

   Collect photographs or drawings of the student and their families for a family collage bulletin board representing everyone in the group. Make puppets for the characters in the story and allow the students to think about planning for producing an enactment after the story is completed.

2. Allow time for the reading of a bibliotherapeutic book. Increase the normal reading time by at least 25% or more time.

   For example, if 40 minutes is normally allowed for reading, the student can have more time such as 10 minutes more to continue the reading. Pace the increased reading time by the student needs. Some students with learning needs will require more time to take in the story while others will get it quicker. Allow for both types of situations.

3. Provide ample time for the students to develop their thoughts about the book.

   For example, the time extension, may allow a student with emotional or attentional difficulties to focus on reflectjon of the book. Have the students draw a picture or make a word map during this time. The visual representation opportunity may elicit thoughts of important thoughts about the book for the student. Bump (1995) suggested using a journal divided with quotes on one side of the page and reactions on the other. In doing a related activity, time can be effectively used to develop student thoughts about the book selected. Here the time extension should relate to the individual student need. More time will be necessary for those with cognitive needs. Encouragement to use the time opportunity may be important to the student who has trouble focusing on work. The student with emotional needs may require specific encouragement to accomplish the task and time parameters may help.

4. Furnish discussion follow-up time with questions that require a complete range of higher level thinking skills as well.

   Include questions involving interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis,

and evaluation. Use student generated questions as much as possible. Be sensitive to the cultural background and any special needs of the student in the choice of questions. They should be appropriate for the student.

5. Evaluate the process and the outcome, directing the student or students to closure through self-evaluation as well.

   Have the students tell and demonstrate where appropriate what occurred at various points throughout the book. Ask what emotions the students felt as these events were revealed. Let them reveal the outcome and then let them tell how they felt about that outcome. Ask if they would have done the same or differently from the characters in the book. Ask them why they feel that way. Do not pass judgement on their choices. This will encourage them to express more freely the next time they have an opportunity to do the activity. This is important for the student experiencing diversity as well as the student who may have special identified needs.

Several additional areas need to be highlighted for effective practice. These include: supportive; safe and positive discussion, use of positive reinforcement, character and situation predictability, nonjudgmental questioning, student-generated questioning, timing, and meaningful extension activities.

1. Supportive, safe and positive discussion.

   A positive discussion of characters in a supportive and safe way is essential to deal with students' expressions of emotions.

2 Use of positive reinforcement

Positive reinforcement used with extension activities is recommended. What the student discovers should be reinforced by positive verbal and nonverbal communications. Learning that the situation or concern occurs in other environments in the stories and with other individuals helps students as they cope with the issues raised in the readings. Knowing that others have experienced the same feelings and emotions is very important to the learner with special needs. The use of themes such as exploring diversity and understanding problems associated with disabilities is essential for learners at risk because of their special needs.

3 Character and situation predictability

Predictability of characters and situations is important for the choice of materials. The closer the characters and situations to the reader, the more identification and understanding will take place. Students who have behavioral difficulties, emotional difficulties, learning problems, and feelings of low self worth have an opportunity to develop confidence in both their academic reading and their feelings about themselves when they can play a part in the story. Confidence comes with the predictability.

4. Nonjudgmental questioning

Nonjudgmental questioning prior to, during, and after reading should focus on the character and that character's feelings. Use of questions such as "How does this make you feel?" should be carefully limited.

According to Smith (1991) and David and Wilson (1992), emotional distance is necessary in bibliotherapy. Bauer (1991) indicates that the story should never become a sermon. Students do not need to be lectured to in their attempts at reading acquisition and understanding. This is particularly important in any bibliotherapy where the student is identifying with characters or situations which may be troublesome or problematic to them. Rather they need support for their coping with feelings.

2. Student-generated questions

The stories should lead to student-generated questions rather than potentially sensitive questions given by the teacher.

3. Timing considerations

Timing is a very crucial component of successful bibliotherapy. When a student has faced an immediate tragedy or trauma, time is needed before bibliotherapy should be attempted. The amount of time before successful bibliotherapy is attempted varies according to the trauma or precipitating incident. Acute events such as divorce of parents or death in the family may require more time for the students to recover before starting bibliotherapy than chronic events such as dealing with fears, long-term illnesses, and relationships where healing of feelings needs to be present.

4. Meaningful extension activities

Extension activities also may be reinforcing for the reader. Hands on experience with an author or reader of the book dressed as a character

from the book. Trips to actual locations of stories such as the zoo or creating papier-mâché or clay sculptures. Watching a film of the book after can stimulate discussion on the reading and students may want to reread to see the specific parts that they may have only surface read before or questions about the differences in interpretation of the book vs. the film interpretation frequently occur.

Structured discussion between the teacher and the student is suggested for secondary students with learning and behavioral problems according to Masters, Mori, & Mori (1999). This may include (1) recall of the main story line or character, emphasizing feelings, values, and attitudes, (2) discussion of how the main character coped, (3) exploring similar problems of students and how they coped, (4) evaluation of the consequences selected by the students' for their problems, & (5) suggestions of alternative solutions to problems, as needed. As problems are not usually unique, learning that others, in real life or fiction, have had the same feelings and emotions can be helpful to troubled students. A benefit of sharing may be the discovery of multiple solutions to a problem.

A large collection of books should be available for the students to use. This allow each student to select a book that relates to their particular unique needs. The teacher should try to expand the classroom library with books that help students using bibliotherapy. The bibliotherapy technique should be used carefully and sparingly. The students do not need a daily bibliotherapy session. Rather the teacher should select an occasional time to do these readings so the feelings can be maximized for effectiveness.

Although additional research needs to be done, many believe in bibliotherapy and are using it while evidence of how it works, why it works, or if it works has been needed (Lenkowsky, 1987 and Riordan, 1991). For effectiveness, Hoagland (1972) suggested that the student complete three stages after reading a book. These include:

1. Personally identify with the situation being presented. This allows the student to see the similarities between their reading and their own lives.
2. Release emotional tensions regarding the problems of the students.
3. Allows insight and empathy into the characters in the story, which allows students to control their own emotions and behaviors.

Benefits

Among the benefits are language enrichment, increase in reading skills, self-confidence, thinking about another perspective, and empathy development. Other benefits based on Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional literacy, include preventative education to combat emotional illiteracy. Goleman (1995) has documented less physical violence in the classroom, less name-calling and fewer put-downs among students while teachers have better dealt with angry students, helped conflict resolution among students, increased their sensitivity to their students and increased their ability to listen. According to Masters, Mori, and Mori (1999), the technique may provide benefit by using situations portrayed through stories that model appropriate values, habits, and attitudes.

Language development for the student using bibliotherapy can be a result along with greater confidence in reading which may lead to more reading proficiency. Increased reading skills are academic benefits as the student has more opportunities to read with a greater variety of materials.

In the social and emotional areas, self-confidence develops with reading proficiency increase and understanding. Thinking about another perspective allows the student to go from concentration on self to thinking about others. Empathy development occurs as the student matures in the process of using bibliotherapy. Collaborative problem solving in collaborative settings develops and is crucial for healthy emotional development.

The primary goal of this study was to explore the varied uses and applications of bibliotherapy with the intent of creating guidelines for appropriate use in classroom settings. In addition, a listing of useful children's books has been collected which are particularly useful for students with disabilities. See Appendix.

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Harris, T.L. & Hodges, R.E. (Eds.) (1995). *The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

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Richardson, R.C. (1998). Social skills instruction for culturally diverse adolescents with behavioral deficits. LA: ERIC Clearinghouse (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 419 997)

Riordan, R. J. (1991). Bibliotherapy revisited. *Psychological Reports, 67*, 306.

Smith, A.G. (1989). Will the real bibliotherapist please stand up? *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries, 2*, 241-249.

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APPENDIX

Booklist of Children's Literature for Bibliotherapy in the Classroom

Booklist of Children's Literature for Bibliotherapy in the Classroom

Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder

Carlson, N. (1996). *Sit still!* NY: Viking Press.
Dixon, E. & Nadeau, K. (1991). *Learning to slow down and pay attention.* Chesapeake Psychological Services.
Gehret, J. (1992). *I'm somebody too.* Fairport, NY: Images Press.
Gordon, M. (1991). *Jumpin Johnny, get back to work.* DeWitt, NY: GSI Publications.
Janover, C. (1997). *Zipper, the kid with ADHD.* Rockville, MD: Woodbine House.
Lears, L. (1999) *Waiting for Mr. Goose.* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.
Levine, M. (1993). *All kinds of minds.* Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service.
Lite, L. (1998). *The affirmation web: A believe in yourself adventure.* Plantation, FL: ADD Warehouse.
Loski, D. (1994). *The boy on the bus.* Writers Press.
Moss, D. (1989). *Shelly, the hyperactive turtle.* Rockville, MD: Woodbine House.
Parker, R.N. (1992). *Slam dunk: A young boy's struggle with ADD.* Plantation, FL: ADD Warehouse.

Dyslexia

Abeel, S. (1994). *Reach for the moon.* Duluth, MN: Pfeifer-Hamilton.
Barrie, B. (1994). *Adam Zigzag.* Des Plaines, IL: Delacorte Press.
Behrmann, P. (1994). *Why is it me?* Altadena, CA: Seedlings Press.
Betancourt, J. (1993). *My name is Brian Brian.* NY: Scholastic, Inc.
Dahl, R. (1991). *The vicar of nibbleswicke.* NY: Puffin.
Dunstan, A. (1991). *Andrew an adventure in learning.* Bermuda: Engravers Limited.
Griffths, A. (1991). *My name is Anita and i am a dyslexic.* University Editions, Inc.
Hampshire, S. (1982). *Susan's story.* NY: St. Martin's Press.
Innes, P. (1990). *Defeating dyslexia, a boy's story.* North Pomfret, VT: Trafalgar Square.
Janoer, C. (1995). *The worst speller in jr. high.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc.
Root, A. & Gladden, L. (1995). *Charlie's challenge.* Temple, TX: U.S.A. Printmaster Press.
Ryden, M. (1992). *Dyslexia, how would i cope?* Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
Smith, S. (1994). *Different is not bad: A book about disabilities.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Learning Disabilities

Adler, C.S. (1986). *Kiss the clown.* Burlington, MA: Clarion Books.
Aiello, B. & Shulman, J. (1988). *Secrets aren't always for keeps.* NY: Twenty-First Century.
Cassedy, S. (1987). *M.E. and morton.* NY: Crowell.
DeClements, V. (1985). *Sixth grade can really kill you.* NY: Viking.
Fleming, E. (1984). *Believe the heart.* Portland, OR: Strawberry Hill.
Froelich, M. (1986). *Reasons to stay.* Boston, MA: Houghton.
Gehret, J. (1990). *Eagle eyes: A child's guide to paying attention.* Fairport, NY: Images Press.
Gehret, J. (1996). *The don't-give-up kid: And learning differences.* Fairport, NY: Images Press.
Giff, P.R. (1984). *The beast in Ms. Rooney's room.* NY: Dell.
Greenwald, S. (1983). *Will the real Gertrude Hollings please stand up?* NY: Little, Brown.
Hansen, J. (1986). *Yellow bird and me.* Cleveland, OH: Clarion.
Kennemore, T. (1983). *Wall of words.* United Kingdom: Faber & Faber.
Kline, S. (1985). *Herbie Jones.* NY: Putnam.
Martin, A.M. (1988).*Yours truly, Shirley.* NY: Holiday House.
Polacco, P. (1998) *Thank you, Mr. Falker.* NY: Philomel Books.
Shreve, S. (1984). *The flunking of Joshua T. Bates.* Westminster, MD: Knopf.
Voigt, C. (1982). *Dicey's song.* Riverside, NJ: Atheneum.

Mental Retardation

Byars, B. (1970). *Summer of the swans.* NY: Viking Press.
Conly, J.L. (1995). *Crazy lady.* NY: Harper Trophy.
Fleming, V. (1993) *Be good to Eddie Lee.* NY: Philomel Books.
Slepian, J. (1990). *Risk 'n roses.* NY: Philomel Books.

Minorities and Immigration

Greenfield, E. (1973) *Rosa Parks.* NY: Harper Trophy.
Goble, P. (1978). *The girl who loved wild horses.* NY: Bradbury.
Knight, M. (1996). *Who belongs here?* Scottsdale, AR: The Heritage Key, Inc.
Lawrence, J. (1995). *The great migration: An American story.* NY: Harper Trophy.
Yep, L. (1975) *Dragonwings.* NY: Scholastic Inc.

Other Disabilities – Blind – Deaf – Physical – Health

American Brain Tumor Association. (1994). *Alex's journey: The story of a child with a brain tumor.* Des Plaines, IL: Author. (Brain Tumor)
Berkus, C.W. (1992). *Charlsie Chuckle.* Rockville, MD: Woodbine House. (Cerebral Palsy)
Booth, B.D. (1991). *Mandy.* NY: Lothrop, Lee, & Shephard. (Deafness)
Buscaglia, L.F. (1983). *The fall of Freddie the leaf.* NY: Holt, Reinhart, & Winston. (Cancer)
Butler, B. (1994). *Witch's fire.* NY: Cobblehill Books. (Wheelchair)
Calvert, P. (1999). *Picking up the pieces.* NY: Aladdin Books. (Spinal Cord Injury)
Cowen-Fletcher, J. (1993) *Mama zooms.* NY: Scholastic Inc. (Wheelchair)
Holcomb, N. (1992). *How about a hug.* Holidaysburg, PA: Jason N. Nordic. (Down Syndrome)
Krementz, J. (1992). *How it feels to live with a physical disability.* NY: Simon & Schuster. (Physical)
Krisher, T. (1990). *Kathy's hats: A story of hope.* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. (Cancer)
Metzger, L. (1993). *Barry's Sister.* NY: Puffin. (Cerebral Palsy)
Osofsky, A. (1992). *My buddy.* NY: Henry Holt & Co. (Muscular Dystrophy)
St. George, J. (1992). *Dear Dr. Bell: Your friend Helen Keller.* NY: Putnam. (Deafness)
Whelan, G. (1993). *Hannah.* NY: Random House. (Blindness)
Wood, J.R. (1992). *The man who loved clowns.* NY: Putman. (Down Syndrome)

Social-Emotional

Charles, F. & Terry, M. (2000) *The selfish crocodile.* NY: Scholastic Inc.
Pfister, M (1992) *The rainbow fish.* NY: North South Books
Pfister, M. (1995) *Rainbow fish to the rescue.* NY: North South Books
Zeier, J.T. (1993). *Stick boy.* NY: Antheneum. Maxwell Macmillan International.